

in many and diverse places; and that its regular presence in such numbers imparts to this portion of the upper Mississippi Valley a faunal coloring of rather more southern hue than was to be expected.

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## NOTES ON SOME OF THE BIRDS OF EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA.

BY J. GILBERT PEARSON.

WHILE making some investigations during the past summer (1898) in connection with the State Geological Survey, I was located from April 1 to August 20 on the North Carolina coast, at various points from Elizabeth City southward to Little River on the South Carolina border. The nature of my work was such as to permit of some opportunities for investigation of the avifauna of the regions visited, and as a result of the observations made at that time, I have prepared the following brief notes.

**Micropalama himantopus.** STILT SANDPIPER.—The region about Cape Hatteras abounded in bird life during my second stay there, which began on May 2, and continued until May 20. On the wet grassy beaches near the lighthouse birds swarmed literally by the thousands. I there observed, and with one exception secured, specimens of Least, Spotted, Semipalmated, White-rumped, and Red-backed Sandpipers; Dowitcher; Sanderling; Semipalmated, and Black-bellied Plovers (some of the latter in full summer plumage); Yellowlegs and Greater Yellowlegs; Wilson's Snipe; Turnstone; and Long-billed Curlew. On May 19, I secured a Stilt Sandpiper. It was shot singly while flying alone, no other birds on the wing being near at the time. This I believe to be the first record of the bird taken in the State.

**Nycticorax nycticorax nævius.** BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON.—Information in regard to this bird's occurrence in North Carolina has been confined to a few scattering notes of single individuals which have been taken at various points. On April 30, I visited a colony of Herons which was breeding on a small island in Mattamuskeet Lake, situated in Hyde County, and counted there seventy-five nests of the Little Blue Heron, all of which contained eggs. These nests were situated in

cypress and willow trees at a distance from the ground varying from ten to twenty-five feet. Two nests of the Night Heron were found; one containing four slightly incubated eggs, the other two fresh ones. Three pairs of the birds were seen and a female which was shot contained in her oviduct an egg which probably would have been deposited in a few days. May 25 a little colony of six pairs of Night Herons was found on Great Lake near Newbern. All six of these nests were placed in a very thick, stunted cypress tree, standing out in the lake some fifty yards from the shore. None of the branches of the tree exceeded a yard in length and their outer ends were well draped with long gray moss, thus effectually screening the nests from view. The tree whose top reached but fifteen feet above the water, was capped by an Osprey's nest which contained three young. All the Herons' nests were occupied either by eggs or young birds, the number in a nest being four in each instance, except one nest which contained three fresh eggs.

In four other rookeries of Herons subsequently visited at points further south, Night Herons were seen, but in each case not over six or eight pairs were found breeding in any one colony. I am informed on good authority that quite a large colony of these birds have their breeding grounds in a swamp on Harker's Island, at the lower end of Core Sound.

**Ardea tricolor ruficollis.** LOUISIANA HERON.—On April 20, at Cape Hatteras, while standing on the sand at the very point of the cape, a Louisiana Heron was closely observed as it flew directly overhead, making for the shore and laboring with a strong southwest wind. A most thorough search of the swamps and ponds in the neighborhood failed to reveal any colony of nesting birds, and no other individuals were met with until reaching Beaufort.

At the upper end of a small mill-pond a mile or more long, located in Carteret County, about fifteen miles from Beaufort, there was found a small but very interesting colony of Herons. Two dozen nests of the Louisiana Heron were noted here and the birds could be obtained with but little trouble. At this date many of the eggs had hatched but there were yet several sets of fresh ones to be seen.

Between this point and South Carolina three other places were visited where these birds were nesting. In one of the larger rookeries in Brunswick County there were on the first of June fully 500 pairs of breeding birds of this species.

During July and early August young Louisiana Herons and their parents come out of the fresh-water swamps in numbers and may be seen any day feeding, singly or in small flocks, along the marshes between Beaufort and Southport. It seems a little strange that so conspicuous and common a bird as this should never before have been mentioned in the lists of North Carolina birds.

**Guara alba.** WHITE IBIS.—The flat marshes which line the banks of North River, three to seven miles northeast of Beaufort, are the feeding

grounds during the entire year of numbers of birds which haunt such regions. In summer hundreds of Herons resort there to feed. There also in summer is occasionally seen the rare bird known to local sportsmen as the 'Mountain Curlew.' While up the river some five miles from its mouth I secured on July 26, a specimen of this bird from a flock of three individuals. It proved to be an immature White Ibis. I could get no account from any of the inhabitants of that region of this species having been seen there in its white phase of plumage. This bird has not, I believe, before been included in the avifauna of the State.

**Anhinga anhinga.** ANHINGA; WATER TURKEY.—While approaching a colony of Herons on the margin of the large rice-pond of the Orton plantation, on the west side of Cape Fear River, fifteen miles below Wilmington, on June 7, an Anhinga was flushed from its nest in a cypress tree about ten feet above the water. The bird flew rapidly away for perhaps thirty rods, then, turning, came driving back overhead, only to return shortly from the opposite direction. At each approach it appeared higher in the air until at a considerable altitude, when it began to circle on motionless wings. The bird was secured by hiding near the nest and shooting it when it alighted near. It was a male in magnificent plumage. Another male bird was seen but no females were observed nor were any other nests found. The nest examined was a heavy structure of sticks and twigs, lined with gray moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*). It contained four badly incubated eggs. I am aware of no previous record of the bird breeding north of South Carolina.

**Phalacrocorax dilophus floridanus.** FLORIDA CORMORANT.—These birds have for some time been known to spend the summer months on our coast, but it was not until the 25th of last May that I was able to locate a breeding colony. After penetrating the woods, swamps, and fresh-water marshes in Craven County for a distance of ten miles or more from the small railway station of Havelock, I at length reached the beautiful secluded sheet of water known as Big Lake. This body of water is approximately five by seven miles in extent. The shore is lined for two thirds the distance by a dense cypress swamp, the remaining third being clothed with a barren pine pocosin. The forest everywhere comes down to the water's edge, and many cypress trees and stumps stand out in the lake for a distance of one or two hundred yards. Many of those trees were capped with Osprey's nests. Along the north side of the lake the Cormorants had their breeding place. Low spreading cypress trees, their tops reaching as a rule not more than twelve to fifteen feet above the water, and standing from fifty to two hundred yards from shore, were the sites chosen for the nests. Eighteen trees, scattered along the shore for a mile and a half, were thus used. A few trees contained only one nest each, some were occupied by two, while in several others six, eight, ten, and twelve were noted. One tree held thirty-eight occupied nests. The number of occupants to the nest, either eggs or young birds, varied from two to three. Many of the young were

old enough to walk about on the limbs of the trees. In all 150 inhabited nests were counted.

The trees holding a number of nests each were evidently old breeding places, for the trunks, limbs, twigs, and every nest was as white from the dried excrement of the birds as though buckets of whitewash had been thrown over all with a generous hand. All signs of life had gone out of the trees save a few bunches of green leaves at the extreme ends of some of the smaller twigs.

No other colony of Cormorants was located, although a roost containing some 200 birds was discovered in an adjoining county.

**Stercorarius parasiticus.** PARASITIC JAEGER.—These birds are reported by fishermen and life saving station men to occur along our coast during the fall of the year, at which time they are often seen chasing Gulls in order to secure their disgorged prey.

In looking over the collection of a taxadermist, Mr. A. Piner, at that time located in Morehead City, N. C., the owner showed me some strange birds which he had taken at various times and for which he had no name. Two of these proved to be Razor-billed Auks (*Alca torda*) taken in Lookout Cove, "sometime after Christmas in the winter of 1890." Another bird which he had secured near Cape Lookout in the autumn of 1897 I found to be an immature *S. parasiticus*. Neither this bird nor the following named species are included in the list of North Carolina birds, published by Atkinson in 1887, or the one issued by Smithwick in 1897.

**Oceanites oceanicus.** WILSON'S PETREL.—This Petrel is well known to all who have occasion to spend much time on the ocean off the Carolina coast in summer. The birds are seldom seen near the shore unless during windy weather, when on such occasions they are often present in large numbers. During the severe storm which raged on the coast August 28, 29, and 30, 1893, many thousands of these birds were driven and washed ashore along the line of beach extending from the mouth of Beaufort Harbor to Cape Lookout, a distance of ten miles. I have this information from several reliable parties. The date of the storm was taken from the log-book of Capt. Wm. H. Gaskin of the Cape Lookout Life Saving Station.

Mr. James Davis, a well known business man in Beaufort, who had occasion to go along the beach to a wreck just after the storm, says: "Every two or three yards lay a Mother Cary's Chicken; many were dead, others were alive but too weak to fly. In places two or three would be lying together; at certain points for a distance of many feet the ground would be completely covered with the bodies, sometimes piled two or three deep. This was frequently the case until I reached the bight of the cape. Here in the cove the slaughter had been tremendous. Thousands of birds sat or lay on the ground, covering the beach like a blanket, extending from the water's edge up into the grass on the higher

ground. The fishermen of the neighborhood carried home with them baskets filled with these birds to eat."

*Cistothorus palustris griseus.* WORTHINGTON'S MARSH WREN.—A Wren taken in the salt marshes at old Topsail Inlet, near Beaufort, on August 2, was identified by Prof. Robert Ridgway as being *C. p. griseus*. The birds seemed not uncommon in certain of the marshes and several unoccupied nests were examined. In the marsh on Gull Island, in Pamlico Sound, about twenty miles north of Cape Hatteras, Marsh Wrens were found in numbers on May 20. Twelve nests were examined, but no eggs or young were found. A specimen taken at this place was pronounced by Mr. C. S. Brimley of Raleigh, N. C., to be *griseus*. Wrens heard singing in the marshes about Southport on June 9, I took to be of this variety, but I did not secure any specimens and hence cannot be positive as to this identification.

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## SOME WINTER BIRDS OF NOVA SCOTIA.

BY C. H. MORRELL.

I WAS in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, from the first of December, 1897, until the fourth of April, 1898, and though collecting was not the object of my visit, careful observations were made and notes taken of the birds seen during that time. The variety of species to be found there at that period is not extensive. December, the first week in January, the last week in February and the month of March was spent on the shore of Chignecto Bay, principally at Shulee, though some time was spent at Joggins, River Hebert and Amherst. During the greater part of January and February I was at Parrsboro on the Basin of Minas. There was little snow in December, the ground being bare most of the time, and no very cold weather. The principal snowfall was in January and February, and the coldest weather was during those months. Several severe storms occurred. March was exceptionally fair and pleasant. The sun shown warm from almost cloudless skies and under its influence the snow melted rapidly, the migrants began to arrive, and the winter birds were soon in full song.